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AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

UNION LEAGUE IN THE 24TH WARD

OF THE

CITY OF PHILADELPHIA,

AT ITS

OPENING CELEBRATION, MAY 9, 1863,

BY

N. B. BROWNE, Esq.

PRESIDENT OF THE LEAGUE.

PUBLISHED BY THE LEAGUE.

1863.

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ADDRESS.

GENTLEMEN OF THE UNION LEAGUE.—On the 1st of March, 1781, it was announced that Articles of Confederation and perpetual Union had been finally ratified and adopted by the thirteen States then engaged in the common struggle of the Revolution. This event filled the whole land with joy. During the seven years of the war of Independence which had elapsed, the Continental Congress had afforded what was at best but a provisional government, and the necessity for another that should unite more effectively and permanently the will, resources and power of the whole country, was not only recognized, but it was solemnly declared by Congress itself that the safety, indeed the very independence of the people depended upon it. Thus, finally, after the slow process of debate in State Legislatures had yielded to the pressure of events, and with the adjustment of the territorial question, and the long-delayed assent of Maryland, came the solemn and formal ratification of the form of government, known as the Articles of Confederation.

And when we look into these Articles of Confederation, we find the perpetuity of the Union was agreed upon and declared in the most solemn manner, and with a frequency of repetition which, in such an instrument, is as singular as it is impressive.

The first object stated in the opening recital is a "perpetual Union" between the States; and in the final article it is declared that "the Union shall be perpetual." In the formal ratification, after acknowledging, with devout gratitude, that the great Governor of the world had inclined the hearts of the people to a "perpetual Union," the delegates proceeded to

ratify and confirm the Articles of Confederation and "*perpetual Union*;" and then, as if to affix the very seal and sanction of the people to this compact, they further solemnly plighted and engaged the faith of their respective constituents that these articles should be inviolably observed by the States, and—mark the final and impressive repetition—"that the Union shall be perpetual."

Five times, in this brief plan of government, is the idea of the perpetuity of the Union repeated in all the varied phrases of formal recital, solemn declaration, devout gratitude and plighted faith! Thus were these sovereign States indissolubly united.

If, then, this government commenced as a perpetual compact of Union, the question may be put most pertinently here, *when* and *how* did it cease to be so? Never were the doctrines of State rights and State sovereignty better understood or more insisted upon than by the men who formed the Articles of Confederation. The Union, as they established it, evidently was intended to last; and although the several members of the confederacy made but sparing concessions of power to the general government, they did not intend to leave it in any doubt, that it was not to be a mere loose alliance, that might fall to pieces, in the centre or at the extremities, upon the whim of any of its members.

When and how, let the inquiry be repeated, was this bond of permanent Union lost, and this rope of sand, as some would make it, substituted?

Certainly not in the present Constitution, adopted in 1789; for the first and leading object stated in that instrument was to form "a more perfect Union." And it is difficult to conceive how a perpetual Union could be made more perfect by being changed into a mere partnership at will. Whatever modifications may have been introduced by it into the grant or definition of the powers of the general government; whatever re-arrangement or division of executive, legislative and judicial functions may have occurred, one thing is certain, that the unanimous compact of perpetual Union, as originally

formed, not only continued, but, in the very nature of things, all right of amendment as to its duration was excluded.

Indeed, everything about the present Constitution implies permanency. Its change of style, from Articles of Confederation to Constitution, carries with it the idea of a government with increased rights and authority; its arrangement and division of powers is that of a self-sustaining, supreme and independent authority; the guarantees, in this fundamental law, of a republican form of government to each State, and to each citizen, of equal rights, protection and participation in the government, necessarily imply continuing authority and permanent supremacy. The reservation to the Federal government of the absolute control and disposition of the territories; the erection of a supreme judicial tribunal for the settlement of all controversies between the States, or to which they may be parties; indeed, every grant, and many of the restrictions of power, indicate, in the clearest possible form, a government of supreme and enduring authority, and one having not only the right, but the constitutional power, to enforce obedience, not only on the part of the private citizen, but of the sovereign State.

The perpetuity of the Union was not more clearly declared and repeated in the articles of Confederation than its indissoluble permanency is guaranteed, we may say, made possible, in that plan of "more perfect Union," contained in the present Constitution.

That Union, the foundations of which Hancock and Adams, Ellery and Sherman, Morris and Lee, and other statesmen and patriots of that period, laid secure and deep in the equal rights of the individual, and the walls of which they strengthened by the buttresses of State rights—that Union was intended to outlive the differences of interest, feeling and section which even then distracted the land; perpetuity was inscribed on every part of it, from corner stone to pinnacle. And afterwards, when Alexander Hamilton, and James Madison, Benjamin Franklin, and, greatest of all, George Washington, with the other master builders and architects who remodeled the edifice

of the Union, gave us the present Constitution, they left it undisturbed in foundation and wall and buttress; they only adapted it to the growing family of States, added new guarantees of individual and State rights, and rendered its permanency possible, by furnishing tribunals of high and last resort, where the sovereign State as well as the humblest citizen could adjust their controversies. It is inconceivable that these latter should receive the structure of the Union as declared in its fundamental law—inviolable and perpetual—and leave it incohering, tottering and ephemeral, as the advocates of the right of secession would contend. No hint or suggestion of such an inherent weakness is to be found in either the Articles of Confederation or the present Constitution; on the contrary, abundant evidence is to be found in both, and in the writings and State papers of that day, that the men of the Revolution felt that they were engaged upon a work that was to endure. It has been reserved for these latter days that the right of secession, as it is termed, should be formally announced, and for this monstrous rebellion to illustrate the fatal mischief and direful consequences of such a doctrine.

It is the twin-brother of that equally absurd but short-lived doctrine of nullification. In each of them the spirit of rebellion, clothing itself in State Sovereignty, assumes the right to annul the law, subvert the Constitution, and destroy the Union. To both of them we may apply the words of Andrew Jackson, in his memorable proclamation, that they are not only "incompatible with the Union," but "contradicted expressly by the letter of the Constitution, unauthorized by its spirit, inconsistent with every principle on which it is founded, and destructive of the great object for which it was formed."

But the heresies of Calhoun have prevailed in the South against the counsels of Washington; and the injunctions of Jefferson, and Jackson, and Clay, have all been forgotten in the mad career of sectionalism of which such men as Davis, and Rhett, and Slidell are the leaders. And at this moment we stand face to face with a rebellion against the authority of the government which, if permitted to succeed, will not only

destroy the Union as it is, but engulf in the dark flood of lawlessness and anarchy every vestige of State or individual rights.

It is against this fell spirit of disunion, whether showing itself in armed rebellion at the South, or secretly undermining the pillars of the Republic, under the guise of political organizations, at the North, that we have banded together in this and similar leagues; and it is but right, on such occasions, in making this public manifestation of our unalterable attachment to the Union, that we should recall, as I have attempted thus briefly, the purposes of the fathers of the Republic in founding it, and their solemn injunctions to maintain it inviolate for our remotest posterity.

For, however painful and alarming the thought may be, it cannot be doubted that the advocates of the right of disunion are not confined to the seat of rebellion; they exist in large numbers and to a dangerous extent in our midst. The man who is ignorant of this fact must have closed his eyes and ears to what is occurring around him. On all sides we meet the treasonable suggestion—now, in the political assembly, or in the privately circulated pamphlet; in partisan speech, or still more partisan press; one while abusing the name of democracy, sometimes desecrating the pulpit or the altar; often putting on the guise of humanity by advocating dishonorable peace, and then again boldly appealing to sectional interests and State pride by calculating the advantages of alliances against the authority and outside the bond of the present Union. Nay, more; this rebellion has not only found sympathizing abettors at our doors, but men, respectable in numbers, in position and influence, are to be found in this city, who proclaim the Union actually dissolved by this rebellion; that Pennsylvania is at liberty to assume her independent sovereignty, and to make new political alliances, as interest or ambition may dictate; and who openly point to the period when a more complete control of the State will enable them to go through the modern approved form of rebellion, by calling a State Convention, and resuming State sovereignty and independence.

So boldly have such projects been avowed, and so possible of accomplishment, that the man must be self-deceived and blind who does not perceive the precipice on the edge of which we stand.

It is to oppose the spread of this dangerous heresy; to counteract the influence of those who theoretically hold or practically act upon it; to arrest this alarming lapse from patriotic attachment to the Union; to sustain the government, without reference to party, in the terrible struggle it is maintaining against those who have repudiated the Union and deny the authority of the Constitution; in short, to encourage in each other and in the community that sentiment of loyalty which honors our flag, upholds the Union, and reveres the Constitution, that these Union Leagues are forming.

The first Union League ever formed in this country was the Continental Congress; distracted by the jealousies and jarring interests of States and sections, even when the common enemy of all was hurling her armies and navies upon them; paralyzed in their heroic struggle for independence by the want of harmony in counsel and effort, they found safety and success in that Union which they then so wisely established. The second Union League met at Carpenter's Hall, in this city; when that convention of glorious statesmen and patriots assembled, who, in providing for a "more perfect Union," devised that unrivaled scheme of political wisdom and statesmanship, the present Constitution.

What they intended to be perpetual let us maintain inviolate! Let loyal hearts and arms defend this Union, the very citadel of our liberty, against insidious treason and open rebellion, within its boundaries, and against all attack from abroad, whether in the shape of hostile armaments, or still more dangerous intervention!

Gentlemen, let us not shut our eyes to the fact, that the men of this day have as grave, as solemn, as pressing duties to perform; are bound by as high obligations, and are threatened by as imminent dangers, as were the patriots of 1781 and 1789. Then foreign oppression, domestic discords, public bankruptcy,

and a government too paralyzed to defend and maintain the liberties and independence already achieved—these were the stern necessities which compelled the men of those days to seek refuge in a united nationality. Now, rebellion and civil war, impending foreign interventions, threatened repudiation of public loans and faith, and the attempted recognition of that chief and most fatal of political heresies which would make our government merely an organized weakness, and leave it, it may be still, a giant in stature, but yet a giant without bones or muscles, just strong enough to stand and to grow, but powerless to defend itself or protect others—these are the still more pressing emergencies which summon us to the defence of our Federal nationality.

Let us believe that the dangers which now threaten the existence of the Union are greater in number and magnitude than were those which opposed and delayed its formation; and that so inestimable is its value to ourselves and our children, that no effort, no sacrifice, no contribution of time or means, can be too great for its preservation!

It is from such a belief, and from a sense of the insufficiency, we may rather say the failure, of all ordinary or merely political organizations to stay this ruin, that we now propose to lay aside former names and distinctions, to forget everything that has heretofore divided us, and to band ourselves together in this league for the Union, the sole test of admission to our ranks being unconditional loyalty—unconditional loyalty, without mental reservations in favor of any party success; without restrictions as to sections; clothing itself in the ample citizenship of the nation, and acknowledging allegiance to nothing less than the whole country.

Loyalty is then the only test; it is the single word we would inscribe upon our banners. And what is loyalty? I ask the question, because some, who have discovered the possibility of obeying the Constitution without maintaining the Union, have started a refinement as to the meaning and nature of loyalty. Knowing more of its etymology than they do of the sentiment, they take exception to the popular use which applies it to the

government of the Union, and they contend it is only due to the Constitution and the law. It does undoubtedly manifest itself in, and cannot be said to exist without obedience to these; and, in this sense, may be as well displayed by the observance of the mere local ordinance or State law.

But, certainly, we mean something more than this when we would describe or express the attachment of an American citizen to his government. Something more than obedience to law actuated the seventy thousand volunteers who responded to the call of their country two years ago, when men from every peaceful pursuit in life, crowded the banks of the Potomac in defence of the national capital; and during these two years of civil strife and bloodshed, of the million of brave and patriotic men who have voluntarily risked life and health, and endured all the privations and sufferings of the camp and the hospital, in the national cause, how many, think you, were influenced to do so by the mere principle of obedience to law? Loyalty does, indeed, include obedience to law; but it rises to a higher motive and principle of action; it seizes upon the attribute which best represents the grandeur and the beneficence of the government—*its unity*; and to that it attaches itself, calling the government itself by that name, and using it as the object of its affection and the bond of its fidelity. It is, indeed, obedient to the Constitution, but loyal to the Union, as the chief end and object of that sacred compact, and, therefore, the civil virtue which includes and represents all others. Let loyalty to the Union, then, be the representative civil virtue; just as virtue itself, originally but the name of one of the virtues, came to represent them all, from being regarded as the most excellent of all!

That this boasted fidelity to the law does not amount to loyalty in its true and highest sense, is made painfully evident every day of our lives by the men in our midst who, claiming to be strict in their observance of the Constitution, yet openly withhold respect from our flag; who insist upon and perhaps obey the letter of the law, but would not willingly contribute a dollar or obtain a soldier to put down rebellion against a

lawful government; the men who cling to "Magna Charta" and the "Bill of Rights," but whose hearts sink and whose faces fall at every success of the national arms, and who can be cheerful and exultant even upon the announcement of disasters that carry anguish to every loyal soul.

Some such refinement as this, which would satisfy one's loyalty by mere obedience to the law, is well described in the prophetic figure uttered of old—"The bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it, and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it."

But it is easier to illustrate than to define this highest of civic virtues; it is better represented by noble acts than by words; we can feel it better than we can express it. You can better understand it by looking at the flag of your country than by examining the dictionary. Among names Andrew Jackson calls up the idea better than John C. Calhoun. Thirteen was its sacred number, when the original sisterhood of States, by common sacrifices, and in a common baptism of blood, sealed their devotion to constitutional liberty, and established the Union; thirty-three was the number which represented the national growth when the rebellion fired its first gun at our flag, and no truly loyal man will ever consent that the least of these shall be struck from the starry constellation. Continental was the large and prophetic word which measured the future spread of the young republic, when this vast continent was unexplored; and now that the Pacific coast sends its daily salutations to the Atlantic, through a broad belt of prospering and united commonwealths, no one State of all is large enough or imperial enough to comprehend the attachment to country of the loyal American heart.

Let then loyalty to the Union—the phrase fashioned by the popular tongue—be our distinguishing virtue and watchword. He who has any conditions to make in his fealty to it, or is loyal to anything less than the Union, is not to be trusted as an expounder or defender of the Constitution.

Let it be loyalty to the whole Union, as our children repeat it in their daily lessons, "bounded on the north by the British

Possessions, on the south by the Gulf of Mexico and Mexico, on the east by the Atlantic, and on the west by the Pacific."

Loyalty must be national ; it cannot be local. The intenser forms of State pride and sectional attachment which have developed themselves at the South are too essentially selfish and jealous to comport with that more expanded and generous sentiment which places country and its welfare above self, neighborhood, section or party. Think, for a moment, of loyalty to South Carolina ! What an inversion of the natural order of things ! It requires an effort of thought to descend to the comprehension of the idea. If it must be to a State, let it be to a State like Pennsylvania, always true to the Union ! As she was one of the first to come into the Union, and has been foremost in sustaining it, so she will be the last to abandon it. Imperial in extent, population and resources, still it is as one of the brightest stars in our national constellation that we glory in her.

Even to Pennsylvania my feeling rises no higher than State pride ; beyond that a nobler sentiment attaches me to my country. I may be, I am, proud of my birth-right as a Pennsylvanian, but my American citizenship is my more honorable and distinguishing title.

Gentlemen, unconditional loyalty shall be our watchword : and our motto, in the language of the poet describing a kindred league—

"Whose only aim
Is to preserve their country ; who oppose,
In honor leagued, none but their country's foes."

LORD LYONS IN COUNCIL

WITH THE

NEW YORK DEMOCRACY.

The British Envoy at Washington has hitherto had credit for a forbearance and impartiality with regard to our internal quarrel whereof Earl Russell has seen fit suddenly to disrobe him. A dispatch written by Lord Lyons to the Minister of Foreign Affairs on the 17th of last November (on the heel of the Democratic triumphs in this and other States) gives an edifying account of a visit by Lord L., to this city on the 8th, and of certain remarkable conferences had by him here with certain persons whom he characterizes as "the conservative leaders." He found those leaders "exulting" over their freshly-won triumph, and says :

"They seem to be persuaded that the result of the elections would be accepted by the President as a declaration of the will of the people ; that he would increase the moderate and conservative element in the Cabinet ; that he would seek to terminate the war, not to push it to extremity ; that he would endeavor to effect a reconciliation with the people of the South, and renounce the idea of subjugating or exterminating them."

Lord Lyons proceeds :

"On the following morning, however, intelligence arrived from Washington which dashed the rising hopes of the Conservatives. It was announced that Gen. McClellan had been dismissed from the command of the Army of the Potomac, and ordered to repair to his home : that he had, in fact, been removed altogether from active service. The General had been regarded as the representative of conservative principles in the army. Support of him had been made one of the articles of the conservative electoral programme. His dismissal was taken as a sign that the President had thrown himself entirely into the arms of the extreme radical party,

and that the attempt to carry out the policy of that party would be persisted in. The irritation of the Conservatives at New York was certainly very great; it seemed, however, to be not unmixed with consternation and despondency.

"Several of the leaders of the Democratic party sought interviews with me, both before and after the arrival of the intelligence of Gen. McClellan's dismissal. The subject uppermost in their minds while they were speaking to me was naturally that of foreign mediation between the North and the South. Many of them seemed to think that this mediation must come at last, but they appeared to be very much afraid of its coming too soon. It was evident that they apprehended that a premature proposal of foreign intervention would afford the Radical party a means of reviving the violent war spirit, and of thus defeating the peaceful plans of the Conservatives. They appeared to regard the present moment as peculiarly unfavorable for such an offer, and, indeed, to hold that it would be essential to the success of any proposal from abroad that it should be deferred until the control of the Executive Government should be in the hands of the Conservative party.

"I gave no opinion on the subject. I did not say whether or no I myself thought foreign intervention probable or advisable; but I listened with attention to the accounts given me of the plans and hopes of the Conservative party. At the bottom, I thought I perceived a desire to put an end to the war, even at the risk of losing the Southern States altogether; but it was plain that it was not thought prudent to avow this desire. Indeed, some hints of it dropped before the elections were so ill received, that a strong declaration in the contrary sense was deemed necessary by the Democratic leaders.

"At the present moment, therefore, the chiefs of the Conservative party call loudly for a more vigorous prosecution of the war, and reproach the Government with slackness as well as with want of success in its military measures. But they repudiate all idea of interfering with the institutions of the Southern people, or of waging a war of subjugation or extermination. They maintain that the object of the military operations should be to place the North in a position to demand an armistice with honor and with effect. The armistice should (they hold) be followed by a Convention, in which such changes of the Constitution should be proposed as would give the South ample security on the subject of its slave property, and would enable the North and the South to reunite and to live together in peace and harmony. The Conservatives profess to think that the South might be induced to take part in such a convention, and that a restoration of the Union would be the result. The more sagacious members of the party must, however, look upon the proposal of a convention merely as a last experiment to test the possibility of reunion. They are, no doubt, well aware that the more probable consequence of an armistice would be the establishment of Southern independence, but they perceive that if the South is so utterly alienated that no possible concessions will induce it to return voluntarily to the Union, it is wiser to agree to separation than to prosecute a cruel and hopeless war.

"It is with reference to such an armistice as they desire to attain that the leaders of the Conservative party regard the question of foreign mediation. They think that the offer of mediation, if made to a radical Administration, would be rejected; that if made at an unpropitious moment, it might increase the virulence with which the war is prosecuted. If their own party were in power, or virtually controlled the Administration, they would rather, if possible, obtain an armistice without the aid of foreign Governments; but they would be disposed to accept an offer of mediation if it appeared to be the only means of putting a stop to hostilities. They would desire that the offer should come from the Great Powers of Europe conjointly, and in particular that as little prominence as possible should be given to Great Britain."

There can be no doubt that this is a fair summary of what the Democratic chiefs here convened to exult over their victory said to Lord Lyons—certainly, of what he understood them to say and to purpose. And, in the light of this revelation, we ask the judgment of every candid mind on the pretense that they favor "a vigorous prosecution of the war," or desire the subjugation of the Rebels in arms. They manifestly cherish no such impulse, no such desire; and all their professions of devotion to the National cause are the sheerest hypocrisy. That their sympathies are wholly with the Rebels, not at all with the upholders of the National authority, has been often evinced, but seldom more clearly than in this bulletin from one who, being a representative of British aristocracy, was naturally admitted to their inmost councils.

We have here, also, an expose of the *loyal* Democratic programme for restoring the Union. Its essence is—Let the Union get down on its knees to the traitors fighting for its destruction, make such changes in its Constitution "*as would give the South ample security on the subject of its slave property*," and this "would enable the North and the South to live together in peace and harmony." This is what our Democrats mean by "the Constitution *as it is*"—that is, as the slaveholders choose to have it transmogrified. Don't they wish they may get it?

From beginning to end of this remarkable dispatch, it is manifest that Lord Lyons is heart and soul with the enemies of our Government and sees wholly through their spectacles. Altering the Federal Constitution to suit the Rebel slaveholders



would in his view be a highly 'conservative' proceeding; while to resist that change and insist on simple obedience to the 'Constitution as it is' is in his view 'radical.' Every missile that can be raked from the gutters of Faction to throw at the heads of our lawfully constituted rulers is in his view respectable and formidable, while nothing that is offered on the side of our Government and those struggling to uphold it seems to him worthy of any consideration whatever. He affords a fresh and striking proof of the fact that the aristocratic caste in Great Britain are in full sympathy with the slaveholding caste in this country, and would deprecate the overthrow of the latter as premonitory of their own downfall. We knew that the British Army and Navy officers passing through our city or touching along our coast were uniformly pro-Rebel; but we did not before suppose that their feelings were fully shared, or at least openly proclaimed, by the official representative of their Queen.

Gov. Seward has the credit of setting the bad example of publishing his diplomatic correspondence with scarcely a fig-leaf of reserve. The fashion will have to be stopped, or we shall have the whole civilized world by the ears. Which of the Great Powers will do mankind a signal service by announcing that the confidential dispatches frequently passing between its Ministers abroad and the Foreign Office at home are henceforth to be withheld from public scrutiny and comment; save in rare and peculiar exigencies? There are few reforms at once so necessary and so feasible.



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